

# **Genesis 12:10-20 - Abram's faith is tested by famine**

## **Memory Verses**

Genesis 12:1-3, 7 NKJV—*The unconditional promises given to Abraham*

Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> **I will** make you a great nation; **I will** bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> **I will** bless those who bless you, and **I will** curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants **I will** give this land."

## **Introduction**

We come back to the history of the life of Abraham. God had called Abraham to leave his home city called Ur of the Chaldeans. It was a rich city located in the Fertile Crescent near the Persian gulf in what is today the country of Iraq. However, Abraham didn't fully obey God. Yes, he did leave, but not without his family as God had commanded. Terah went with Abraham and Sarah, as well as Lot. It would have been hard for Abraham to leave them behind, but, as we will see as the story progresses, God always knows best, and His ways are always best—it always works out better in the long run if we trust God and do things His way—even if it means making some hard choices now.

We must remember that God knows the future, we don't. He knows people's true intentions, we don't. He knows our heart's desires, we often don't, at least never fully. We often think we know what will satisfy us, but often God has something better for us, and often that something better is something that we would have never chosen for ourselves.

Terah only wanted to go as far as Haran, and because Abraham was still more loyal to his earthly father than the Heavenly Father, he stayed with his father Terah in Haran. Terah's name means "delay", and this delay in obedience resulted in a spiritually and physically parched and barren life in Haran (which means "parched and barren"). Abraham made lots of money while he was there, so the world would consider him successful. But Abraham was out of the will of God. Is it good to be rich in the things of the world if it means that we will be poor in the things of God? We often have to choose between enjoying a piece of this world, or the peace of God.

It was only when Abraham finally entered the land of Canaan that he worshipped God, and God revealed more of His plan to Abraham. However, it was not to be "happily ever after for Abraham" just because he had obeyed God a little bit more. Abraham will find out that trials are a part of our walk with God.

## **Outline: (Genesis 12:10-20)**

1. Abram's faith is tested by famine (vs 10-20)
2. Some take home points from Abraham's choice to move out of the will of God and move to Egypt
3. The steps of "unfaith"—the consequences of unbelief

## **Genesis 12:1-20 NKJV**

**Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

**4** So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. **6** Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

**7** Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. **8** And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. **9** So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

**10** Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. **11** And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. **12** Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. **13** Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

**14** So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. **15** The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. **16** He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

**17** But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. **18** And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? **19** Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." **20** So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

## **1. Abram's faith is tested by famine**

### **Abraham goes to Egypt**

#### **Genesis 12:10 NKJV**

**Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.**

v 10 **In the land:** This is the land of Canaan. This is where God told Abraham to go. Abraham worships God at Bethel, but then what happens? There is a famine. We should look at the good or easy times as opportunities to focus on building up our faith to prepare for the next inevitable trial—like a country builds and stores weapons and ammunition for the next inevitable war, or the ship's captain prepares his ship for the next inevitable storm. We need to invest time and energy into our relationship with God during the good times so we will be prepared for the next trial: *Spending time in the word of God strengthens our faith.*

*There will always be a coming trial, because that's how character grows.* If we are well prepared—if we have drawn near to God—then the trial will make us stronger and more Christlike. If we have not prepared ourselves—if we have drawn near to the world—then we will fail to trust God and suffer harm—we *will leave the place of blessing, no longer being in the will of God.* The trial will show us whether we are putting our trust in God or ourselves. We will see that Abraham fails this test, and there are both short and long negative consequences for both Abraham and his family. We'll talk about these later.

v 10 **There was a famine in the land:** Like a tree can only grow strong if there *is* wind, so faith can only grow if there *are* trials. Abraham has eventually obeyed God—by leaving his homeland and also his father (but only because he died), and is now in the land of Canaan. Even though Abraham has not left Lot behind, God still honours Abraham’s partial obedience by giving him further revelation (v 7—the land). The time will come when Abraham’s faith is strong enough to ask Lot to leave. But that time is still years in the future.

Remember that God tests, but satan tempts. The same circumstances are both tests from God’s perspective, and temptations from satan’s perspective. We will talk more about this later.

v 10 **And Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land:** There are always two ways of doing things—the world’s way or God’s way. The world has ways of satisfying our desires and cravings that are opposite to what God says: The way of living by faith is always opposite to the way of living by sight.

It’s important to notice that, up to this point, God had been telling Abraham where to go, step by step. But here there are no instructions from God to leave the land, even though there was a famine. If Abraham had stayed in the land, then he would have seen God provide for him and his family—God had promised to bless Abraham. But now Abraham would never know or experience the power of God to provide for him when there was a famine. Abraham would never be able to tell his children, “There was a time when there was a severe famine, but God miraculously provided for us...”

Human nature tends to panic, to not stop and think logically and clearly about the situation. Biblical thinking goes like this: God is in control, and God loves me, so this circumstance must be what is best for me. I will therefore pray that God would give me the faith to continue to trust Him in the middle of this difficult circumstance. I know that I will only grow to love and trust Him more, become freer than ever from the pull and lure of the world, and therefore experience more and more of the love, joy, and peace that comes from walking in fellowship with God.

In contrast, worldly thinking goes like this: This circumstance doesn’t make me feel good right now, so I need to escape. I need to do whatever I need to do so that I will feel “happy” again—*remember that the world’s definition of happiness is to have everything you want when you want it, otherwise known as instant gratification.* The problem is that, like any drug, we need a greater and greater fix to maintain the “happy high”, and eventually we will be unable to maintain our “happy high”. Eventually we’ll experience misery at the same time as having everything we want—we will discover the hard way that the gifts that the world gives will never satisfy in the long run. We will also damage relationships with those around us as we selfishly crave and fight for what we want (see James 5). We’ll get what we want, but will have nobody to really enjoy it with. We’ll be like the lonely man in the middle of the crowd of people.

James 5:7-11 NKJV

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> *You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

<sup>9</sup> Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! <sup>10</sup> My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. <sup>11</sup> Indeed we count them blessed who endure. *You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*

“Faith is not a mushroom that grows overnight in damp soil; it is an oak tree that grows for a thousand years under the blast of the wind and rain.” (Barnhouse)

There were probably many ways that Abraham could have justified his decision to disobey God and temporarily move to Egypt. He could say, “I’m concerned for my family”. But we will see that his family suffered greatly because of his lack of faith in God. He could say, “I might lose some of the wealth that I worked hard to build up.” But we will see later that the wealth he gained while out of fellowship with God only causes problems for Abraham later on.

Proverbs 10:22 NKJV

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

Riches and wealth are deceptive. When the world gives them to you as a reward for worldly living, those riches will only cause you harm—they will not help you but will rather tear you apart, with the minimum consequence being that they will distract you from following God, and be a constant temptation for us to trust in the security that wealth provides, instead of the security that God provides.

v 10 **Down to Egypt:** In the Bible, Egypt has always been a picture of the world, with satan is its prince. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Vanity fair is a picture of the world, offering everything that people could want—money, fun, entertainment, as well as access to any sin that they desired. Many pilgrims got distracted by the world’s wares and failed to continue their journey—they forgot why they were saved and what they were saved for, and the also forgot that the Vanity Fair would one day be judged and destroyed.

“Throughout Scripture, whenever people go to Egypt, they always go “down to Egypt”, because Egypt is a type or picture of the world. Abram was doing well, but now he falls again because he didn’t remain in the land God showed him. A famine made him think he had to take matters into his own hands—always a dangerous place to be.” (Jon Courson)

Isaiah 31:1-3 NLT

What sorrow awaits those who look to Egypt for help, trusting their horses, chariots, and charioteers and depending on the strength of human armies instead of looking to the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> In his wisdom, the LORD will send great disaster; He will not change his mind. He will rise against the wicked and against their helpers.

<sup>3</sup> For these Egyptians are mere humans, not God! Their horses are puny flesh, not mighty spirits! When the LORD raises his fist against them, those who help will stumble, and those being helped will fall. They will all fall down and die together.

v 10 **To dwell there:** The Hebrew word translated “dwell” means a temporary stay. Abraham thought that he could “get in and then get out” of this dangerous place without getting hurt. He thought that he could just stay in Egypt until the famine had ended and then go back to the land of Canaan. However, if God had not directly intervened, it would have been a permanent change for Abraham. Why? While in Egypt, Sarah was taken from him (a permanent arrangement because Sarah would have become Pharaoh’s wife), and he enjoyed living in a house (a picture of becoming settled and dwelling permanently in a place) instead of a tent (a picture of being a pilgrim, nomad, or temporary resident), as Abraham was accustomed to while living in the land of Canaan (see Hebrews 11:9-10). The same thing happened to Lot when he moved towards Sodom—he ended up settling down and becoming a leader in the town, becoming just like them. We must be careful. Just a little compromise always leads to more compromise, which if left unchecked, will lead to us backsliding, or moving away from God.

**Genesis 12:11-13 NKJV**

**And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. <sup>12</sup> Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”**

Abraham is now out of God’s will. Therefore, until Abraham repents of his initial sin of failing to trust God to provide for him in the land of Canaan during the famine, everything he does will only make things worse. One sin always leads to another, because once we start down the road of rebellion against God (independence from God), we are necessarily living by our own strength—we are being controlled by our sinful nature, and the works of the sinful nature always end in death

**Romans 8:5-6 NLT**

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

We will see Abraham go from bad to worse, until God uses a pagan king to rebuke him. Abraham then returns to Bethel, to the “house of God”, where he will once again worship God. But for now, Abraham is out of fellowship with God, and walking in his own strength.

**v 11 I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance:** Even at 60 years of age Sarah is still in her prime. Given that she lived to 127 years old, she was only middle aged, the equivalent of someone around 30 years old today.

**v 12 Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live:** This was the culture of the day in the depraved and evil culture of Egypt. If they saw that a man had a beautiful wife, they would often kill him so that they could have his wife. So Abraham asked Sarah to lie for him, to save his own skin, to cover up the previous mistake that he had made of going down to Egypt in the first place. The material benefit for Abraham of this lie was that the Egyptians would buy Sarah from him. So he would literally be selling his own wife to save his own life. It doesn’t get much lower than this.

This would have never happened if Abraham had stayed in the will of God, even though it would have been difficult for him. Consider that God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son. Therefore, it would be impossible for them both to starve to death. They could have trusted that God would have kept them alive somehow.

This is also incredibly selfish of Abraham. He’s basically saying, “Sarah you lie for me so that I’ll be okay. It doesn’t matter if you become someone else’s wife. It doesn’t matter if you are a part of a king’s harem. Just as long as I don’t have to go hungry because of the famine, and I don’t lose any of my wealth.”

**v 13 Please say you are my sister:** “This was in fact a half-truth. Sarai was Abram’s half sister (Genesis 20:12). *Yet a half-truth is a whole lie.* Abram’s intent here was clearly to deceive, and he trusted in his deception to protect him instead of trusting in the LORD. If you want to do something wrong, you can find some good reasons to do it. If you can’t think of the reasons yourself, the devil is happy to suggest them. (David Guzik)

## Sarai is taken into Pharaoh's house

### **Genesis 12:14-15 NKJV**

**So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup> The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.**

v 14 **The woman was taken into Pharaoh's house:** Obviously, Abraham didn't care much for God's plan of salvation. God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son, and that the promised Messiah would be a descendant of that son (In you all the nations will be blessed—Genesis 12:3). Thankfully, God always keeps His unconditional promises. We will see that God kept Sarah from being defiled by a pagan king by directly intervening in the situation. It is very true that what we need saving from most of the time is ourselves.

## Abraham benefits materially from his sin

### **Genesis 12:16 NKJV**

**He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.**

Again, like in Haran, Abraham benefits financially from his sinful choices. Never equate material prosperity with being in fellowship with God. The prosperity gospel, a false gospel promoted by some churches like Hillsong and Bethel and others, links faith and fellowship with God to financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing. If the prosperity gospel is true, then Jesus was out of fellowship with the Father His whole life—Jesus was poor His whole life (He had no where to lay His head—see Luke 9:58, and didn't even have enough money to pay the temple tax—see Matthew 17:27), was characterised by being called a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (see Isaiah 53:3), and was rejected and forsaken by everyone when He needed them the most (see Mark 14:50).

Money is a curse. It's like an anaesthetic. It has the effect of putting Christians all over the western world into a spiritual slumber, becoming rich in worldly treasures, but poor in the things of God. I can't find any references in Scripture where money actually did a person any good. In the Old Testament, God promised to physically bless the nation of Israel if they were obedient. However, every time they experienced this material blessing, it caused them to forget God, and so turn away from Him. In the New Testament, there are many warnings about the dangers of money. For example:

### James 5:1-3 NKJV

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! <sup>2</sup> Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

### Matthew 13:22 NKJV

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

### Matthew 19:23-24 NKJV

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Mark 10:23-25 NKJV

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” <sup>24</sup> And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Luke 1:53 NKJV

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

Luke 6:24-26 NKJV

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup> Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Again, money is a good slave, but a terrible master. It is true that money can buy a lot of things that can make life easier for us, and make us feel secure. But a life of ease is really a wasted life. In the end, money cannot satisfy the need we have to be loved.

*Fear leads to compromise which leads to disgrace*

**Genesis 12:17-20 NKJV**

**But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. <sup>18</sup> And Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way.” <sup>20</sup> So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.**

v 18 **What is this you have done to me?** Abraham’s reputation is shot. He is “persona non grata” (no longer welcome) in Egypt. A compromising Christian makes the world want to vomit—they are disgusted by them. We could paraphrase what the king said as, “How could you, as a prophet of God, lie and treat your wife so poorly, and cause so much suffering for my family?” If not for God’s direct intervention, Abraham’s choice to be selfish would have resulted in the Messiah not being born.

Consider that everybody deep down knows the Bible is true, and that God is real (see Romans 1:18-32—they are *willingly ignorant*). Deep down, they know that Heaven and Hell are real, no matter how much they may deny it. How do I know? Because everyone who is unsaved is subject to the fear of death—“*Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. <sup>15</sup> Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying [death]*” (Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT).

So if the world sees Believers, people who know the truth about Heaven and Hell, not caring enough to speak the truth that could save them, and at the same time living like the world, they know that their profession of faith does not match their lifestyle. This is called being a hypocrite, and the world hates hypocrites. Remember that the word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek word for “actor”. The actor would wear a large mask, pretending to be someone else.

## How Abraham's choices affected Lot

Something very insidious is also happening. Whether or not Abraham wants to be, he is a mentor, an example, for Lot. Lot is looking at Abraham and becoming like him. Abraham's compromising, materialistic, and covetous ways also influenced Lot. Lot later would follow Abraham's example of putting wealth and comfort first (when he chose to go towards Sodom), and it would end up being the ruin of both him and his family. As parents and leaders we must be aware that we have little ones who follow us, and want to be like us: are we good examples—are we a blessing or a curse to those around us?

## **2. Some take home points from Abraham's choice to move out of the will of God and move to Egypt**

### We tend to fail in the area we are strongest in

Here's the father of faith faltering in the arena of faith because a person always struggles and stumbles in their area of strength... (Jon Courson). Here are three examples:

- Righteous Noah fell when he got drunk in his tent. Noah's strength was righteous living. He fails by committing an unrighteous act. Genesis 6:9, "This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."
- Moses struck his rod against a rock and said, "You rebels, must we fetch water for you?" His strength was meekness, self-control and humility. But here he loses his temper. Num 12:3 tells us, <sup>3</sup> (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)
- Unsheathing his sword, Peter was ready to take on a whole army in order to defend Jesus in Gethsemane. Yet, only hours later, he faltered when a little girl asked him, "Aren't you one of His?" Peter's strength was boldness, but he succumbed to fear.

The area in which you're strongest is the area you'll be most vulnerable because this is where you are most likely to depend on your own strength. At the point you say, "That's not a problem for me; I'll never fall there"—watch out because that's the very area where you'll experience difficulty. Where you know you're weak, you rely on God.

1 Cor 10:12-14 NKJV

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

### The sin of worry—fear is the enemy of faith

Abraham's initial lack of faith—his fear of going hungry—lead him to travel down a dangerous road. And now he is controlled by the fear of self-preservation, which leads to lying and the loss of his wife. Fear is a downward spiral—fear only leads to more fear. Listen to what Jesus says about worry or fear.

Matthew 6:31-34 NKJV

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**”

v 34 **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow:** **Therefore do not worry** could be read as... *do not start to worry about tomorrow.*

*Worry is a sin because it shows unbelief, a lack of faith*

Why not worry about tomorrow? Because we can't change tomorrow. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We need to plan for the things we do know, bills, present issues etc. However, we are not to imagine what *may* happen. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:7 that we need to have a sound mind. **We can make up problems that are ours all alone to worry about and live though them emotionally.** I bet that none of you ever do this. It must be only me... and Abraham. What will I do if there isn't enough feed for my animals? What if there isn't enough food for my family and my servants? I can imagine him inventing scenarios - all of which would be bad. He then used these made up, fictitious fears to justify doing something that was wrong.

v 34 **Sufficient for the day is its own trouble:** *We can* change what happens *today*. We need to have our minds and emotions engaged on what is happening now, today, otherwise we are wasting our emotional capital or energy on things that aren't real. The problem with this is that the things that we are *actually* going through we don't handle correctly.

### **3. The steps of unfaith**

To finish off today I would like to look at the opposite of the “steps of faith”. Hebrews 11:8-19 outlines the maturing of Abram's faith. Now, we have the opportunity to look at what the steps of unfaith or unbelief look like. In Abram's example there are six steps downward—a downward spiral:

#### 1. **Unbelief**

Humanly speaking, Abraham did the right thing, going to where there was food. However, it was not a part of God's plan for his life. We can only please God if we trust Him—“*And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV). Only God knows the big picture. We need to learn to trust Him.

#### 2. **A Lack of worship**

“The second step in Abram's decline is indirectly suggested. Abram left Bethel, his place of worship, and he did not get back to Bethel until he was expelled from Egypt. Bethel, meaning “house of God,” was Abram's last recorded residence before his going to Egypt, and we are told that it was there that Abram had built “an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord” (Gen. 12:8). Perhaps in leaving Bethel, Abram left his place of worship, since Scripture does not record him worshipping again until he returns.” (James M. Boice)

Worship is like a litmus test for the believer. If we are trusting God, then we will want to worship Him more and more. However, if we are not trusting God, then worship and church and Christian fellowship become a chore for us. Why? Because our sin has separated us from God—we are out of fellowship with God.

### 3. **Growing Self-confidence**

“When someone is cut off from God by unbelief and other sins, the next step in that person’s decline is an increase in self-confidence. That is, the person begins to discount the wisdom of God, found in Scripture, and instead begins to substitute a wisdom and confidence of his own.” (James M. Boice)

This the dilemma we face when we are walking according to our sinful nature. Since we have already rejected God’s plan for our lives, we cannot depend on God for protection and provision—*God never promises to bless our sinful ways*. Therefore, we learn to figure things out ourselves, to do things our own way, because by walking away from God we have pushed Him out of our lives. Proverbs 3:5-6 is the solution to his downward spiral of unbelief, these steps of unfaith, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight”.

### 4. **More sin**

“Abram’s initial unbelief was sin, but to this initial sin more is now added. Abram lies, as we have just seen. Moreover, he gets Sarai to lie also, thus compounding sin by involving increasing numbers of individuals in it (Sarai, the servants, and others). Even Pharaoh is almost involved. He would have committed adultery with Sarai, though innocently, thinking her to be Abram’s sister rather than his wife, had God not preserved Sarai’s honour. This is the way sin works. It adds to itself, like a snowball rolling downhill. Do not think you can sin “just a little bit.” You cannot. Sin is stronger than you are.” (James M. Boice)

### 5. **Great loss**

“Abram had no idea what was going to happen to him in Egypt, but no sooner was he there than he found his scheme inadequate. He thought Sarai would be in his protection while he negotiated. Imagine his shock and fear when, entirely apart from his careful calculations, Sarai was taken from him and brought into the household of Pharaoh to be the ruler’s wife.” (James M. Boice)

**When you turn to your own devices rather than obeying God’s clear commands, you usually do so for the sake of some thing or person you cherish. You are willing to abandon God to preserve your “precious.” But if you follow this course, it is precisely this you will lose. (see Luke 16:26 and Mark 8:35)**

### 6. **Rebuke and deep humiliation**

God loves us too much to let us go on sinning. Like a loving father He will discipline us and bring us back to our senses.

Hebrews 12:5-6 NLT

And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline, and don’t give up when He corrects you. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one he accepts as his child.”